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XXI. *Some Account of an Insect of the Genus Buprestis, taken alive out of Wood composing a Desk which had been made above twenty Years. In a Letter to Alexander MacLeay, Esq. F.R.S. and Sec. L.S. by Thomas Marsham, Esq. Treas. L.S.*

*Read June 19, 1810.*

MY DEAR SIR,

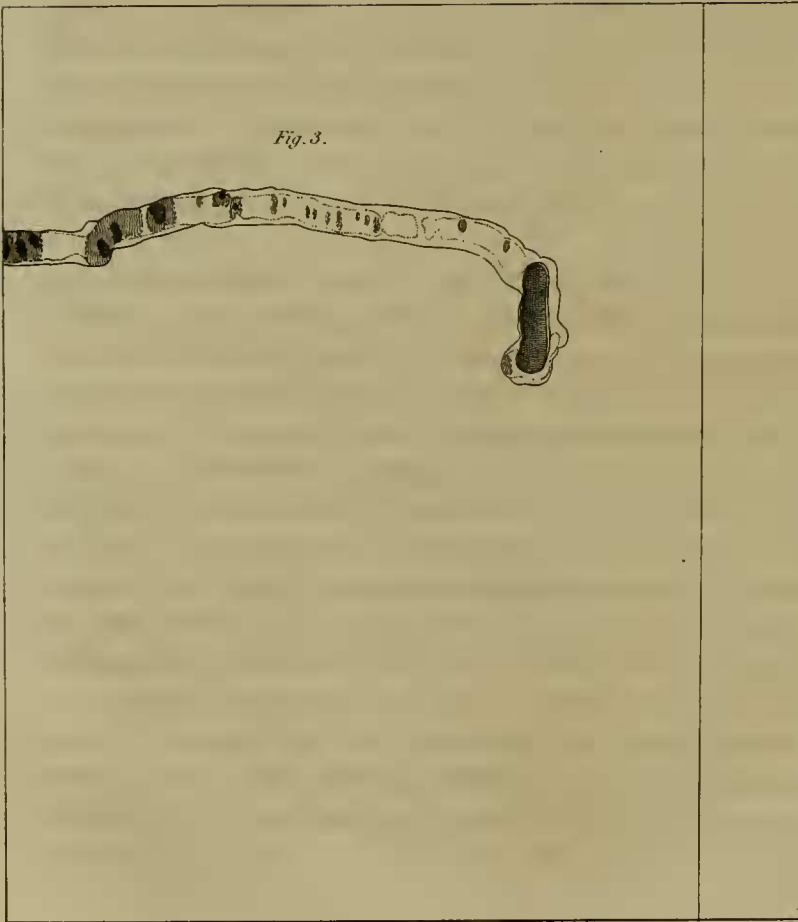
As every circumstance that tends to the illustration of Natural History is particularly gratifying to you, I feel pleasure in announcing to you a curious and extraordinary fact, in our favourite science of Entomology, communicated to me by our Right Honourable friend Sir Joseph Banks, and which I am anxious to have laid before the Linnæan Society, with a hope that it may stimulate others to impart similar and other singular facts as they occur, in order that, by collecting and registering a number of such communications, a new and beneficial light may open into the admirable works of the omniscient Creator, and the clouds of darkness that at present overshadow them may be removed.

On the 3d of January 1810, Mr. James Montague, one of the Surveyors to the Corporation of London, on going to his desk in the Office of Works at Guildhall, observed an insect, which had been seen by his brother in the early part of the day, en-

deavouring to extricate itself from the wood which formed part of the desk. Mr. Montague with his penknife carefully released it from its cell, and it proved to be a beautiful coleopterous insect, of the genus *Buprestis*, full of strength and vigour. The desk, which is 8 feet 9 inches long and 3 feet 5 inches wide, is made of fir wood, which is perfectly sound. It was fixed in the office in the year 1788 or 1789, and it has remained there, untouched, ever since, excepting that about three years ago it was planed to remove some ink spots; by which operation the animal had a very narrow escape from being discovered, as was apparent from the thinness of the wood over the cell when it attempted to come out. The insect with a piece of the wood about a foot square, cut out nearly from the middle of the desk, was sent to Sir Joseph Banks; but a thin shaving had previously been taken from the surface of the board, by the officious care of a carpenter, who chose to shave away the stains of ink.

When I first saw this insect alive in Soho Square, both Sir Joseph and myself were much struck with the richness, beauty and elegance of its colours, particularly on account of its having come out of a plank imported from the Baltic, as those splendid insects in general inhabit the hottest climates. On examination, we found it described by Fabricius in his *Systema Eleutheratorum*, ii. 204. 101. as *Buprestis splendens*, although he adds "*Habitat in China.*" It is also described by Paykull in his *Fauna Suecica*, vol. iii. 229. 16. under the name of *B. splendida*. "*Habitat in Uplandia varius.*" And Gyllenhal, who has given the best and most particular description of it, in his *Insecta Suecica*, i. 455. 15. adopts the name of *B. splendida* after Paykull, and quotes *Hertst. Col. ix. 55. 38.* which I have no doubt is the same, as this author likewise refers to Paykull. Gyllenhal seems also to think that *B. pretiosa* of *Herbst. ix. 127. 6. tab. 144. fig. C.* is the same





same insect; but in this I cannot agree with him, as neither description nor figure accords with *B. splendens*.

The annexed figures, TAB. XXXII. fig. 1. and 2. represent our insect in its perfect state. Fig. 3. is a reduced drawing of the piece of wood, with the excavation from which the insect issued: the dark spotted parts are exact representations of the wood, as it appeared when first in our possession: the lighter shades mark the appearance after a thin shaving had been taken off by a plane: proceeding further with the same instrument, the opening extended to the dotted lines; and the outer lines show the full breadth of the excavation, as made by the insect, when it was planed down to half its depth. The total length of the channel could not be ascertained, as it is evident the whole width of the plank was not sent. Fig 4. represents a section of the entrance of the full size.

It is a subject of curious inquiry to know in what state the insect remained for such a term of years in this wood, whether as a larva, a pupa, or as a perfectly formed animal, or what length of time in each state. Some insects remain a considerable time in the larva state, as the Wire-Worm, which is said to be five years before its change into pupa. Others again remain two or three years as pupa, and many coleopterous insects will live a considerable time in their last or perfect state. The present discovery, however, establishes one fact, which has hitherto appeared doubtful, viz. where the larvæ of *Buprestis* inhabit, and on what substance they feed. The celebrated Baron De Geer, and after him Olivier, suspected that they lived in dry wood, because the first had discovered a dead specimen of *Buprestis rustica* in a beam of a house, and the latter *B. Mariana* upon the trunks of worm-eaten pine-trees, and in the timber-  
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